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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN FARM ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION.

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So far as I know the first meeting in the United States relating to agricultural economics was held in connection with the 9th annual meeting of the American Economic Association, at Johns Hopkins University, in 1897, the report of which was published by the American Economic Association.<sup>1</sup>

This meeting consisted of the discussion of seven economic questions propounded by L. H. Bailey of Cornell University; W. A. Scott, University of Wisconsin; C. S. Walker, Lester F. Ward, John F. Crowell, R. E. A. Seligman, M. W. Folwell, Walter F. Wilcox, E. R. Johnson, Thomas G. Sherman, and E. D. Peters. The general title was put in the form of "Is there a distinct agricultural question?", but most of the discussion centered about problems of land tenure, mortgage indebtedness and credit, and the movement of population from country to city. While the questions stated by Professor Bailey, if followed out in detail, would have brought up questions of farm management, the interest of those participating in the discussion did not lead them to give any particular attention either to the economics of farm management or to the economics of marketing.

It is interesting to find the phrase, "maladjustment of agriculture to other industries," which is the one we have heard so much of in recent months, and to find Professor Johnson saying: "It is not national but international in its scope and it is to be settled only with reference to other nations."

It appears that the next important public meeting relating to economics and farm management was at St. Louis, December, 1903. This was a joint session between Section I of the Association for the Advancement of Science and the Society for the Promotion of Agricultural Science. The papers relating to agricultural economics were as follows: "Fundamentals of Forestry of the New Agriculture" by

<sup>1</sup> Economic Studies, American Economic Association, vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 52-67.

Thomas H. Sherrard; "Improvement in Farm Management" by W. M. Hays; "Economic Functions of Live Stock" by Charles F. Curtiss; "Agricultural Economics" by Henry C. Taylor; "Evolution of Agriculture in the Middle West and Its Social and Economic Significance" by Eugene Davenport. This program is of interest in the study of the history of the American Farm Economic Association, because it indicates that those connected with the early beginnings of farm management and of agricultural economics were meeting together along with deans of agriculture as early as 1903. W. M. Hays, as Professor in the University of Minnesota, was the first to begin agricultural cost accounting in this country and, later, as Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, was responsible for beginning cost of production studies in the Federal Department of Agriculture.

The next meeting that may be said to have a relation to the genesis of the Farm Economic Association was a Round Table in Agricultural Economics held as a part of the 20th annual meeting of the American Economic Association, December, 1907. This meeting was held in the library of the State Historical Society, at Madison, Wisconsin, and Professor T. N. Carver was chairman of the meeting. In his opening remarks he states: "This is the first Round Table on Agricultural Economics, in fact, the first time the subject of agricultural economics has been recognized by the American Economic Association." The meeting was devoted, largely, to the question of "What is Agricultural Economics?" "What does it include and what place ought it to have in the college course?" It is of interest to note that those present and participating in the discussion included the men interested in the subject from the standpoint of farm management and country life as well as those who had approached the field more largely from the field of economics. Kenyon L. Butterfield, R. P. Teele, F. W. Blackmar, John G. Thompson, W. A. Peck, Edward C. Parker, David Kinley, B. H. Hibbard, H. C. Taylor, W. D. Hoard, and John N. Glenn participated. The Proceedings were published by the American Economic Association in 1908.<sup>2</sup>

The next year the American Economic Association met at Atlantic City, New Jersey, in December, and devoted one section to Economic Geography and Agricultural Economics. Edward Vandyke Robinson read a paper on "Economic Geography" and John Lee Coulter read a paper on "Coöperation in the Marketing of Agricultural Products", after which the subject of Agricultural Economics was discussed by J. B. Morman and T. N. Carver. While the marketing

<sup>2</sup> American Economic Association, Proceedings, 3d series, vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 59-82.

question received more attention on this occasion than at previous meetings, the farm-management phase of the subject was practically ignored. The proceedings of this meeting are found in the Quarterly of the American Economic Association.<sup>3</sup>

Independent development of work in farm economics was begun by the teachers of farm management. Dr. G. F. Warren called a meeting of the teachers of farm management in conjunction with the Graduate School of Agriculture at Cornell University in July, 1908. At the Graduate School of Agriculture at Ames in 1910 Dr. Spillman gave a special series of lectures on farm management and plans were laid for the organization of the American Farm Management Association. It was organized on July 27 during the last week of the graduate school. The purposes of the association as indicated by the constitution were:

1. To promote the investigation and teaching of farm management.
2. To consider lines of investigation best adapted to the needs of the work of farm management and to suggest to various investigators plans of correlation and coöperation in the work.
3. To investigate the methods of lecture and laboratory work in farm management and to make suggestions to the members of the Association and to colleges intending to organize courses in farm management.
4. To hold annual meetings at times and places designated by the executive committee.

The following men participated in the organization: G. N. Lauman, elected chairman of the meeting; C. W. Pugsley, E. H. Webster, M. E. McCulloch, W. J. Spillman, D. H. Otis, H. Hayward, B. H. Hibbard, G. F. Warren, J. A. Foord, Frank D. Gardner, K. L. Butterfield, Andrew Boss, L. H. Goddard, Leroy Anderson, D. H. Doane, and E. H. Thomson. This association had a very rapid growth and held meetings annually, reports of which were published every year.<sup>4</sup> Membership grew steadily. Its further history is traced later in this paper, in chronological order.

In December, 1910, a group of men interested in Agricultural Economics met with the American Economic Association and the American Statistical Association at St. Louis and held a special ses-

<sup>3</sup> American Economic Association Quarterly, vol. x, No. 1, pp. 247-274.

<sup>4</sup> American Farm Management Association. Report of Annual Meeting. 1st-3d. 1910-1913.

American Farm Management Association. Record of the Proceedings of Annual Meeting. 4th-8th. 1914-1918.

sion, in which Legrand Powers, H. C. Taylor, B. H. Hibbard, J. L. Coulter, J. G. Thompson, E. V. Robinson, and T. N. Carver participated. The proceedings of this meeting were published by the American Statistical Association.<sup>5</sup>

The American Farm Management Association proved to fill an important place and usually held its meeting in conjunction with the meeting of the Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations. A statement of analysis of rural problems prepared for the American Farm Management Association by Kenyon L. Butterfield separated definitely the fields of Farm Management and Agricultural Economics. This analysis was not acceptable to all the people interested in the field and, as a result, a special committee of the Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations was appointed, with Dean T. F. Hunt as chairman, to report upon the relation of, and the place of, agricultural economics and farm management in the courses of study in agricultural colleges.

The Farm Management Association met with the Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations at Columbus, Ohio, in November, 1911, and had a joint session on agricultural economics and farm management. Discussions were developed in which each one indicated the field as he saw it. The report of the committee, which pointed toward the ultimate combination and correlation of the work in farm management with the work in agricultural economics, is found in the Proceedings of the 25th Annual Meeting of the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations.<sup>6</sup>

The American Economic Association provided for a Round Table on farm management at its meeting in Boston, December, 1912. Henry C. Taylor was chairman of the Round Table and the discussion was participated in by T. N. Carver; C. K. Graham of the Hampton Institute; J. A. Valentine, then a farmer near Boston and specialist in farm accounting; Richard Hittinger, a market gardener near Boston; W. H. Bowker, well known in the agricultural chemical industry; Wilbur O. Hedrick, Professor of Economics in the Michigan Agricultural College. The proceedings of this Round Table are to be found in the Supplement of the *American Economic Review*.<sup>7</sup>

From 1913 to 1916 the American Farm Management Association and the National Conference on Marketing and Farm Credits, which

<sup>5</sup> American Statistical Association, Quarterly Publications, vol. 12, pp. 460-489.

<sup>6</sup> Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, Proceedings 25th annual meeting, pp. 18-33.

<sup>7</sup> American Economic Review Supplement, vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 96-113.

met annually at Chicago, were the principal organizations in the United States for the discussion of questions relating to agricultural economics. The National Conference on Marketing and Farm Credits, together with the Commissions National and State, led in the development of economic legislation and had an important relation to the development of the Federal Farm Loan System and the marketing activities of the United States Department of Agriculture. In the later meetings of the Conference, problems of land tenure were included in the program of the Conference. In this way the Conference gradually came to include the whole field of Agricultural Economics other than farm management.

The National Association of Agricultural Economics grew out of the Conference on Markets and Credits and had its inception in a group of about thirty agricultural economists and state marketing officials who met in Chicago in 1915. These men felt the need of an organization that would unite their interests and give them an opportunity to discuss various economic problems in a somewhat more scientific way than was being done at the National Conference. A committee was appointed to arrange a meeting in 1916 to decide on a plan for organization. The committee appointed consisted of Paul Vogt, W. O. Hedrick, and J. L. Coulter.

The group met again in Chicago in 1916 with the National Conference, and presented a program, received the report of the organization committee, and voted to organize the Association of Agricultural Economics. They adopted a tentative constitution and made plans to solicit membership from among the various groups of economists present at the National Conference. Alexander E. Cance was chosen President and W. O. Hedrick Secretary and Treasurer. About forty members were reported. The purposes of the organization were as follows:

1. To unite the interests of agricultural economists.
2. To promote the study of various phases of agricultural economics; to encourage research and the discussion of problems and subjects pertaining to the theory or practical application of the principles of agricultural economics.
3. To disseminate information relating to the subject of agricultural economics.
4. To collect and disseminate information concerning agrarian legislation; and to analyze, digest, and classify agricultural laws in their economic application.
5. To hold an annual meeting at some place to be designated by the members of the executive committee.

During the year the membership was increased and included instructors in agricultural economics, extension service men in marketing, investigators of economic problems in agriculture, state and national marketing officials, and in general men who were interested in agricultural economics, either from a practical or an academic standpoint. A great deal of interest was manifested in the new organization.

During the year 1917 the National Association of State Marketing Officials decided not to hold a meeting in December. The National Conference also decided that its work was completed. In consequence, a movement was inaugurated, and it gained considerable ground, to unite the National Association of Marketing Officials and the Agricultural Economists as soon as a meeting could be conveniently arranged. Meantime, some twenty members of the Marketing Officials united with the Association for Agricultural Economists.

The National Association of Agricultural Economists met at Philadelphia in December with the American Economic Association. About thirty members were present and practically all of them were academic economists. At that time the organization had about seventy-five members, and a prospective membership list sufficient to bring the number up to about one hundred.

The American Farm Management Association also met with the American Economic Association in December, 1917, and it was at this time that the proposal to consolidate the two associations was first brought forward. While many in both associations favored the consolidation, it was decided that a committee of three should be appointed from each of the associations for the purpose of considering the matter and reporting at the next meeting.

Meantime, two other movements were in process. Several members of the American Economic Association felt that a new organization with a broad program was less desirable than one with a much narrower scope and affiliated with the American Economic Association, similar to the Association for Labor Legislation. Another movement was the enlargement of the scope and purposes of the Farm Management Association to include all questions of economics, to change the name to the American Farm Economics Association, and to affiliate the Association of Agricultural Economists and the Farm Management Association.

The Association for Agricultural Legislation was approved by most of the academic agricultural economists, although there were

some who felt that the scope of the organization was too narrow and did not allow for the inclusion of a great number of practical economists working on other problems or who were very doubtful as to financial support of such an organization. Sufficient assurances of financial support were given to win over the doubters and the ill-starred Association for Agricultural Legislation was launched by a group of members of the American Economic Association in December, 1917.

The American Farm Management Association voted to appoint a committee of three to meet with a similar committee from the National Association of Agricultural Economists to consider a basis of affiliation. The joint committee agreed upon consolidation under the title of American Farm Economics Association and reported this conclusion to their associations. The American Farm Management Association voted in January, 1919, to change its name to the American Farm Economic Association and to change its constitution so as to broaden the scope of work to include that formerly covered by the National Association of Agricultural Economists. Pursuant to the agreement in the joint committee, the Association of Agricultural Economists abandoned their organization and joined the American Farm Economic Association. This seemed the practical way to bring about the consolidation, as the Farm Management Association was more completely organized and had a very much larger membership. By this date the membership had reached 350. Prior to this time, as the Farm Management Association, this organization had had no relationships with any other economic association, but had gradually broadened its field until it covered substantially all phases of farm economics except marketing.

Since the change of name and the absorption of the National Association of Agricultural Economists, this Association, under the new name, has been in closer association with the economists of the country and has frequently met at the same time as the American Economic Association.

At the Baltimore meeting in January, 1919, the American Farm Economic Association voted to begin the publication of a quarterly journal and the first number appeared under the date of June, 1919.<sup>8</sup>

The marketing officials who had been affiliated with the National Association of Agricultural Economists, feeling that they had special interests that bound them together, formed an organization of state marketing officials which gives especial attention to the administra-

<sup>8</sup> JOURNAL OF FARM ECONOMICS, vol. 1, No. 1, June, 1919.



tion of State and Federal marketing activities. This organization is not a general organization. Only state marketing officials can be active members, although others may be associate members. It is a society of officials and as such has important work to do.

The American Farm Economic Association is rendering valuable service in stimulating thought and in helping to solve the economic problems of the American farmer. The membership at the present time is approximately seven hundred. It is the only comprehensive organization of agricultural economists in the United States covering the fields of farm management, marketing, land economics and agricultural credit.

#### REMARKS BY W. J. SPILLMAN.

My connection with the development of farm management and rural economics came about in this way. On July 1, 1894, I went to Pullman, Washington, as Professor of Agriculture and agriculturist to the State Experiment Station. The country was new to me and very different from anything I had ever seen. I planned an elaborate list of experiments with a view to finding out as much as I could about the agriculture of the State. Later I had the opportunity to travel widely over the State in connection with the Farmers' Institutes, which gave me an opportunity to learn that the more progressive farmers of the State already knew at least half of what I was trying to find out. I was so much impressed with the vast amount of knowledge the better class of farmers had that in January, 1902, when I came to the National Department of Agriculture and found myself at liberty to plan my own work, I chose to begin the deliberate study of farm practice, with a view to getting together and analyzing the knowledge farmers had already gained in their experience.

It was only a short while until it was perceived that there was a great unexplored field of such knowledge, and that there was a science of farm management hidden in this field. I came here as head of the Office of Grass and Forage Plant Investigations, but by July 1, 1905, the character of the work of that office had become well differentiated from ordinary agronomic work and the name of the office was changed to Farm Management and my title was changed from Agrostologist to Agriculturist. It is only fair to state that Professor W. A. Hayes, then of the Minnesota Agricultural College and later Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, was responsible for the term "Farm Management" which we adopted for the name of the new science. Dr. H. C. Taylor had used this term in an essay as early as 1893, but that fact was not then known to us here.

In addition to the work which was being done in Minnesota, Cornell University developed a strong course in farm management and coöperated very fully and freely with us here at Washington, to our great advantage. Professor Warren deliberately trained his students for the examinations in our office, a fact which accounts for the large proportion of Cornell men in the old office of Farm Management. Meanwhile our present chief, who was then at the University of Wisconsin, was working along much the same lines, and we finally came in contact and found that our work was sufficiently similar to make coöperation advantageous, and thereafter we coöperated extensively with Dr. Taylor and his people at Madison. Other institutions gradually took up work along these lines and interest in them is now universal.

The exact content of the entire field is not yet outlined in minute detail and there is perhaps some little confusion as to the distinction between farm management and other branches of the general subject of rural economics. I have recently made an outline of the entire subject, as I understand it, which I hope will clear up this difficulty. I may say that I was stimulated to do this by a suggestion from Dr. Taylor. The general subjects which constitute what I have always called Farm Management may be comprehended under four headings. They are:

1. Distinctions between farming and other businesses.
2. The factors of success in farming, such as:—size of business, yield per acre, production per animal, economy in the use of labor and power, and economy in equipment.
3. Farm organization: financial, physical, and business.
4. Farm records.

The next subdivision of the general subject is Marketing. Then follow subjects of a more general character, such as:—prices and the forces that control them, the use of credit in farming, rural insurance, tenancy, and rural life problems.

I think it is a fortunate thing that all these branches of investigation have been brought together in one organization, for this will make possible the intimate coöperation which is necessary for the full development of all of them.

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